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DATE OF PUBLICATION: 111243Z OCT 13.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE.

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COUNTRY OR NONSTATE ENTITY: (U) South Africa (ZAF).

SUBJECT: (U//~~FOUO~~) [REDACTED] Nelson Mandela Funeral - Mthatha

Airfield upgrades in Eastern Cape, South Africa incomplete

DATE OF INFORMATION: (U) 13 Jul 2013.

CUTOFF: (U) 16 Sep 2013.

SUMMARY: (U) SEE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, TEXT PARAGRAPH 1, BELOW.

SOURCE NUMBER A: (U//~~FOUO~~) Open Source//New Age Ne ws.SOURCE A: (U//~~FOUO~~) "New Age". Weekday, national daily newspaper.

South Africa. In English. Influential paper which has a broad-based readership. Date of Source: 20131010.

CONTEXT A: (U//~~FOUO~~) Information obtained through normal scan of local news.WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASSIFIED ~~SECRET//NOFORN~~.TEXT: 1. ~~(C//NF)~~ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. The upgrading of the Mthatha Airport [REDACTED] in the Eastern Cape, which

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began about three years ago, has not been completed. The urgency surrounding the airport upgrade completion surfaced during former president Nelson ((Mandela)) health scare. In the event of Mandelas death, the airport will be a key hub for his burial at nearby Qunu. The only upgrade that had been completed is the 468 million Rand

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Pages 4 &amp; 5 Withheld in Full

(approximately 46.8 million USD) runway which was officially opened by the then Transport Minister Ben ((Martins)) in July with a 2600 meter by 45 meter runway. A further seventy million Rand (approximately seven million USD) is yet to be spent on critical support infrastructure, including the terminal building, parking and fencing.

2. (U//~~FOUO~~) The upgrading of the Mthatha Airport [redacted] in the Eastern Cape, which began about three years ago, has not been completed. The urgency surrounding the airport upgrade completion surfaced during former president Nelson ((Mandela)) health scare. In the event of Mandelas death, the airport will be a key hub for his burial at nearby Qunu. Despite assurances from the national and provincial governments that the airport would be completely upgraded by October 2012, the upgrade process is still in beginning stages. Government Officials tasked with the project have been giving conflicting reports about the completion of the project amid reports that the delay was hampering potential investment in the province.

3. (U//~~FOUO~~) A task team was formed several years ago to facilitate the upgrade of the airport. The provincial department of transport said a contractor hired to upgrade the airport terminal building and security features pulled out after legal complications. The only upgrade that had been completed is the R468m runway which was officially opened by the then Transport Minister Ben ((Martins)) in July with a 2600 meter by 45 meter runway. A further seventy million Rand (approximately seven million USD) is yet to be spent on critical support infrastructure, including the terminal building, parking and fencing. The tender has still not been advertised. Provincial transport spokesman Ncedo ((Kumbaca)) said they were planning to issue the tender soon. Somadoda ((Fikeni)), who is heading the airport task team, said the upgrade had taken far too long and blamed the provincial government for the slow progress. Fikeni stated that three contractors were removed from the project before accomplishing the contracted work.

4. (U//~~FOUO~~) There has been no leadership focus on Mthatha Airport. The design of the terminal building was initially two floors but now there is indication that it will only be one floor. National Transport spokesperson, Tiyani ((Rikhotso)) declined to respond to questions on the Mthatha Airport state of readiness to receive foreign leaders should an emergency arise. Rikhotso stated that the airport is being upgraded to unlock economic potential in the King Sabata Dalindyebo area. Rikhotso said people had to land in East London and drive for two hours to get to Mthatha. ((Kumbaca)) stated that the upgrade of the airport was a presidential project but would not give details about when the upgrade would be completed.

5. (U//~~FOUO~~) The South African National Defence Force was at one stage said to be taking over the airport but has now indicated that they would no longer be involved as previously announced by the then Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Lindiwe ((Sisulu)).

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